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ED 010 900 EA 000 025

PARENTAL GRIEVANCES AND SCHOOL POLITICS.

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PUB DATE JUN 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$2.08 52P.

DESCRIPTORS- *PARENT SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP, *FAMILY SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP, *PARENT STUDENT RELATIONSHIP, *SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP, *PARENTAL GRIEVANCES, EUGENE

TO AID IN THE EXPLANATION OF PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS, THE DEVELOPMENT, NATURE, AND HANDLING OF PARENTAL GRIEVANCES WAS ANALYZED. INTERVIEWS WITH 1,669 STUDENTS AND 1,992 PARENTS PROVIDED DATA TO EXPLORE THE FOLLOWING FIVE MAJOR PROBLEMS--(1) THE DISTRIBUTION OF GRIEVANCES, (2) THE STUDENT-PARENT TRANSMISSION OF GRIEVANCES, (3) THE RELATION OF GRIEVANCES TO SCHOOL AFFAIRS, (4) THE SUBSTANCE OF GRIEVANCES, AND (5) THE REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES. THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY WERE THAT (1) 13 PERCENT OF THE PARENTS INTERVIEWED HAD GRIEVANCES WITH COURSE CONTENT, (2) 27 PERCENT OF THE PARENTS HAD GRIEVANCES WITH "OTHER EVENTS" AT SCHOOL, (3) SCHOOLS CLASSIFIED AS CONTROVERSY PRONE WERE POSITIVELY CORRELATED WITH HIGHER GRIEVANCE RATES, (4) STUDENTS AND PARENTS REPORTED SPECIFICALLY PERCEIVED GRIEVANCES AT NEARLY THE SAME FREQUENCY, (5) STUDENT-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS AND DIFFERENTIATED ROLES OF THE MOTHER AND FATHER DETERMINED THE INTERPRETATION OF TRANSMITTED GRIEVANCES, AND (6) 58 PERCENT OF THE COURSE CONTENT GRIEVANCES OCCURRED IN THE AREA OF RELIGION AND POLITICS. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE CONFERENCE ON POLITICS AND EDUCATION (UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, JUNE 14-17, 1966). (GB)

EA 010 900

Conference on

POLITICS AND EDUCATION

Sponsored by

The Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration

University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

June 14-17, 1966

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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PARENTAL GRIEVANCES AND SCHOOL POLITICS

During an imposingly large fraction of their majority years most American parents entrust their children to an institution known as the school. Each school is, among other things, a political system. To say that we have little grasp of the parents' relationships with the school as a political system is to belabor a point made some years ago, but one which is still valid.[1] In this paper we shall attempt to cast some light into this murky area through the use of mass-public survey data.

Our first inclination was to follow the path of the political participation and decision-making studies. This would be a useful enterprise; and at one juncture in this report we shall utilize some data of this kind. Our major thrust, however, lies in another direction. From the parent's point of view the school is a producer of outcomes, outcomes most immediately realized through its impact on his child, but also visible in other forms such as taxes. When studying the political participation of parents we are looking at their roles as producers.

In another sense, though, the parent is a consumer. As a consumer he develops tastes, preferences, or criteria as to what the outcomes should be and evaluates these outcomes in terms of his criteria. Some minimal level of supportive consensus for current outcomes would seem essential for the maintenance of the political system enveloped by the school. Yet much of the dynamic flavor of school politics erupts from states of dissatisfaction or grievances which develop within the system. The emergence of grievances, while significant for the impact it may eventually have on the

system in general, is also important at the individual level. This is especially so with respect to how vexing the grievances are and how they are processed. To the extent that politics is concerned with the development, nature, expression, and management of grievances, the school community provides a remarkable arena for inquiry.

A number of empirical questions may be asked about parental grievances toward the schools. The answers should lead to a better understanding of the parents' political relationships to the school and of the school community as a political system. We shall address ourselves to five major problems: 1) the distribution of grievances according to individual and school level properties; 2) student to parent transmission of grievances; 3) the interrelationships between grievance-holding and participation in school politics; 4) the particular substance of grievances; and 5) the redress of grievances.

To explore these questions we shall draw upon data gathered in the course of the Survey Research Center's study of political socialization among high school seniors. During the spring of 1965 interviews were held with a national probability sample of 1669 students, distributed among 97 secondary schools, public and nonpublic in due proportions. Schools were selected with a probability proportionate to the estimated size of their senior classes as of the 1963-64 school year.[1] Although the sample was designed to be self-weighting, the lack of precise figures on senior class sizes meant that differential weights (averaging 1.2) had to be applied to the students from each school.

Part of the ancillary data gathered included interviews with the parents of the students. Parents were randomly designated in such a fashion that two-thirds of the mothers and two-thirds of the fathers should have

been interviewed or, to state it another way, one-third of the students were assigned father-only interviews, one-third mother-only, and one-third both father and mother. Altogether some 1992 parents were interviewed, with a response rate of 93%. Due primarily to the presence of more single parent households headed by a mother, the total is distributed between 1106 mothers and 886 fathers.

Although the parent interviews were gathered primarily for auxillary purposes, we may now treat them as the major units of analysis. In the analysis the parent(s) of each student receives the same weight as the student. Using the parent data as a cross-sectional sample of parents of high school seniors necessitates introducing a further weighting procedure which reduces by one-half the value of those parents who form part of a mother-father pair (of which there were 430).[1] The weighted N upon which most of the following analysis will be based is 1927; the raw N is the original sample of 1992.

Two further comments about the parent sample are in order. One, since second-semester seniors formed the original sample, the parent sample is surely not a representative sample of parents with children in that age-cohort because dropouts were not sampled; proper allowance should be made for this in interpreting the data. Second, the sample includes 11 nonpublic schools, and the nonpublic school parents comprise 10% of the sample. Preliminary analysis demonstrated, with respect to the variables to be utilized here, that few meaningful and consistent differences appeared between this segment of the sample and the remainder. Therefore, these parents have been retained in the general analysis although we have also examined them separately.

The Distribution of Grievances

As part of a general attack on the question of the relative impact of the home versus the school as agents of political socialization, we sought to determine how parents viewed the schools as educational, political, and social systems. Two root questions served as the basis for determining if the parents had undergone any disturbing experiences with the school their seniors were attending. One focussed very specifically on the content of classroom instruction: "Has your (son) (daughter) ever been taught or told things in any of (his) (her) classes at high school that you didn't like?" The other question cast a wider net: "Do you recall if anything else has happened during the last two or three years that made you upset or concerned about the high school your (son) (daughter) attends?" Replies of "yes" or "no" were obtained for each question. Operationally, an affirmative answer will be construed as a grievance held by the parent.

Parents proved to have fewer grievances about what the student had been told than about other events at the school, the proportions being 13% for the former type and 27% for the latter. As suspected, the second question did tap a larger set of grievances. Whether these are small or large proportions depends in part upon one's perspectives. School administrators who may eventually deal with the grievance might view the figures as alarmingly high especially if they are clustered. Critics of American education might say they are low. It should be recalled that the questions do not merely ascertain if the parent has a general gripe--they seek out specific dislikes and (emotional) upsets.

We may now take up the distributions of these dissatisfactions. Dissecting these distributions could readily occupy the burden of our presentation, but we shall be content to make a fairly general sweep of the terrain.

Both individual and school-level properties will be examined. Grievances may be a function of characteristics possessed by the parent, characteristics of the school, or a combination of the two. Individual properties will be discussed first.

Two conflicting lines of thought can be entertained about the relationship of social and political characteristics to the bearing of grievances. On the one hand, it could be argued that those individuals who are in general most disadvantaged, most alienated, and most withdrawn from socio-political life would develop grievances more frequently than their opposites. School processes and outcomes would be construed as resulting in more benefits for the more advantaged. Grievances, though often suppressed by the individual, would emerge from this "we-they" view. This is perhaps a caricature but it will serve as a reference model.

The second line of reasoning takes as a starting point the assumption that high social and political interests and resources predispose one toward fault-finding. Such persons are less likely to be disadvantaged, alienated, and withdrawn from socio-political life. Even though the system may in general be beneficial to them, the range of skills, expectations, and values typically in their possession result in more grievances when these conditions are laid against outcomes.

As it turns out neither of these constructions resonates very well with the data, but the second provides the better fit. Table 1 indicates that grievances are somewhat more prevalent among Whites than Negroes, the better educated, the more socially trusting, and the more politically efficacious. Notice, however, that the overall associations between these variables and possessing grievances are quite modest using gamma correlations as the measure.[1] The same was true of related variables such as occupational status and

TABLE 1

Relationship Between Four Variables and Occurrence of Grievances

	What child told	Other events	N[a]
Race			
Negro	13%	18%	(199)
White	18	28	(1717)
	gamma=.26	gamma=.30	
Education, Household Head			
0-7 grades	10	17	(232)
8 grades	10	20	(252)
9-11 grades	9	25	(364)
High school graduate	12	29	(566)
Some college	18	35	(257)
College graduate	19	34	(240)
	gamma=.20	gamma=.20	
Social Trust Index[b]			
Low 1	7	22	(210)
2	12	23	(244)
3	13	27	(387)
High 4	14	29	(1059)
	gamma=.12	gamma=.11	
Political Efficacy Index[c]			
Low 1	6	14	(176)
2	9	24	(324)
3	13	27	(528)
4	14	32	(570)
High 5	17	30	(303)
	gamma=.20	gamma=.16	

[a] N's vary slightly for each column; the smaller N is the one given.

[b] Constructed from responses to these three statements: 1)"Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" 2) "Would you say that most people try to be helpful or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?" 3) "Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance or would they try to be fair?" "Trusting" answers were scored "1" and not trusting answers "0."

[c] The four items employed are the standard SRC statements. Disagree responses were scored "1" and agree responses "0."

subjective social class. No differences exist between men and women.

Two findings lend at least slight support to the other line of reasoning. One rests in the negative relationships (-.24 and -.10) found by length of residence in the community. The shorter the amount of time he has resided in the community the more likely will the parent have a grievance. Newer arrivals are not necessarily more socially and politically disadvantaged but they are likely to have orientations and modes of behavior which set them somewhat at odds with the rest of the community. The longer the parent resides in the community the more favorably disposed and accustomed he becomes to the content and style of its educational process and the less likely he is to see these at variance with his own values.

A second glimmer here is that religious minorities proved a bit more likely to have dissatisfactions. In the case of what the child had been taught this was true of a segment composed of nontraditional Christians (e.g., Christian Scientists, Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons) and non-Christians (excluding Jews). For dissatisfactions about other events at school this was true of Jews. Again, the results were not overwhelming but they lend some support to a "marginal man" interpretation.

This and other preliminary work with individual social and political characteristics led us to believe that only very modest amounts of the variation in grievance rates could be explained by such properties. We agree with the related conclusion by Bloomberg and Sunshine that ". . . the frequent assertion that educational values are directly derivative from individual social traits is both oversimple in form and incorrect in content."[1] We shall, therefore, turn to school and structural features to see if they offer a better purchase.

Our intuitive notions about what structural variables[1] might be systematically related to dissatisfactions were quite primitive. As an initial gambit, however, it was hypothesized that an increasing complexity of the school and the surrounding environment might generate more grievances. Using rather crude approximations for degree of complexity, this turned out to be untrue. Expressions of dissatisfactions varied scarcely at all according to the size of the school, the span of grades encompassed, the size of the community, or its degree of metropolitanism.[2] A number of other hunches were explored including the effects of academic level, dropout rate, rates of parental participation in the PTA, and the public, nonpublic character of the school. Again the results were near zero correlations. Nor did regional location account for much variation.

One intriguing finding lies in the relationship involving religious and racial heterogeneity. If, for example, the schools are placed on scales according to the proportion of the students who are Catholic (or Negro) and then these scales are "folded" we find that as we move from the ends of the scale to the middle that the parental grievances increase somewhat. The more heterogeneous the school the higher the grievance rate. While suggestive, these relationships are not at all powerful.

One further step in the analysis lay in combining individual with school properties. Illustratively, we looked at the association between grievance and religious make-up controlling for the parent's religious preference. Similarly respondent's race was controlled in the grievance-racial composition cross-tabulation. Such procedures did little to improve upon or change the initial bivariate relationships.

These analyses lead to one of two conclusions. First, grievances actually are rather uniformly distributed among parents and schools, with the modest

exceptions noted, and their appearance cannot easily be accounted for by a number of individual-level and school-level variables. Seoond, the uniform distributions obtained actually mask inter-school variations not detected by the foregoing analyses. To justify either conclusion we will have to examine the validity of the second. A straightforward way to do this is to look at the grievance levels within each school. Table 2 shows the results when the schools are grouped according to the proportion of parents responding in the affirmative to each of the root questions about specific dissatisfactions.

By inspection there is a wide range among the schools, a range which is not merely an artifact of one or two extreme values. The standard deviation from the mean of 12.7% for dissatisfaction about what the child was taught is 10.1; and the deviation from the mean of 27.2% for the other type of grievance is 15.0. Some schools are clearly marked as having virtually no dissatisfactions among parents whereas others have substantial amounts.

Implicit here is the operation of factors or combinations of factors which are school-specific; they are not picked up in across the board analysis. An illustrative factor would be the degree to which the school has been involved in any controversies during the recent past. Without intensive case studies we cannot know very much about the nature and intensity of these controversies. We can make a crude approximation as to whether issues have arisen by utilizing information obtained during the course of interviews held with the principals of the sample schools. Responses to three questions were employed to construct an admittedly rough index of controversey-proneness.[1] Considering the relative crudity of the index, it interlocks moderately well with the grievance rates. Using Spearman's rho to measure the rank order correlation between the two, coefficients of .43 and .35 were produced, with the higher figure pertaining to grievances about what the child had been taught.[2]

TABLE 2

Levels of Parental Grievance
Among the 97 Sample Schools

	Parent upset by:	
	What Child Taught	By Other Events
Percentage Having a Grievance	No. of Schools	No. of Schools
0	12	1
1-4	5	5
5-9	33	4
10-14	10	11
15-19	16	14
20-24	8	6
25-29	8	7
30-34	3	11
35-39	1	14
40-44	1	10
45-49		7
50-54		6
55 + [a]		1
Total	97	97

[a]The proportion for this one school is 73%.

Within the confines of this paper we cannot go on to introduce other variables which depart from the more standard classifications of schools and individuals and which lie heavily in the realm of school-parent interactions. We are persuaded that the explication of differential grievance rates depends upon data which show unique properties of school-community systems. Once more this conclusion is quite sympathetic to that reached by Bloomberg and Sunshine in their pioneering effort.[1]

Student-Parent Transmission

In seeking to explicate the appearance of dissatisfaction with respect to the child's classroom instruction we have yet to deal with the what is perhaps the most obvious explanatory factor, viz., whether the child had actually passed on to the parent an incident(s) which the child judged would upset the parent. While studies of political socialization point up the transmission of values, skills, and information from parent to child, and properly so, the reverse flow is seldom investigated. School-related phenomena are likely candidates for an investigation of such flows, at least with respect to information transmission. What transpires at school is dinner table conversation in many homes, though this is undoubtedly less true during high school than elementary years. The student is the primary information-giver in this context and may, by selective devices and postures, condition in an important way the parent's perception of the school and the child's relation to it. In what follows we shall explore this process with rather opaque but, hopefully, suggestive data.

We do not have direct evidence on whether the student did relate what he construed to be an episode which might upset his parents, but we do possess data indicating whether he felt such an event had occurred.[1] Parents might evaluate an event in a fashion at odds with the student's evaluation. What the student thought was a harmless, innocuous occurrence might upset the parent and, conversely, what the student adjudged to be an inflammatory incident might be dismissed lightly by the parent. Given these ambiguities plus the probable measurement error involved in the questions, we may be disappointed in what results from a test of the obvious hypothesis, to wit:

parental reports of whether their child had been taught things which upset the parents will vary directly with whether the child himself believes he has been so instructed. Despite the above-mentioned contingencies which can mitigate the hypothesized relationships, the proposition is too obvious to ignore.

In the aggregate, the students reported a perceived grievance with almost exactly the same frequency as did the parents--12% for students, 13% for the parents. Or, to look at it the other way, virtually the same proportions of students and parents felt that the child had not received objectionable content. This would lead to the immediate speculation of high congruity or agreement between students and parents. Because both students and parents reported negatively in such high proportions, there will automatically be a high entry in the "no-no" combination. Assuming near-perfect agreement, the four-fold matrix which combines the parent-student responses in pairs could look like Table A. In practice, the data do not bear out what might be optimistically inferred from the marginals. Table B reveals the departures from the near-perfect agreement case, not the least of which is the fact that the "yes-yes" quadrant contains by far the fewest cases and has dropped off precipitously from its postulated value in Table A. There is noise in the system and we may now approach the data in a slightly different way to detect its location.

Table A
(Postulated Values)

Student Report	Parent Report: Yes	Parent Report: No	
Yes	11	1	12%
No	2	86	88%
	13%	87%	100%

Table B
(Actual Values)

Student Report	Parent Report: Yes	Parent Report: No	
Yes	3	9	12%
No	10	78	88%
	13%	87%	100%

If the student's perception is taken as the antecedent act in a causal chain, it will be useful to arrange the data in a fashion to show the possible linkage. Are the students who felt they had been told objectionable things in class more likely to be paired with parents who said the same than are students saying they had not been so taught? Some support exists for an affirmative answer to the question, as these percentages suggest:

		Parent Report: Yes	Parent Report: No	Total
Student Report	Yes	27	73	100%
	No	11	89	100%

Students avowing they had been told things which would upset their parents are somewhat more likely to have parents echoing this view than are students denying the occurrence. These differences, while in the anticipated direction, fall decidedly short of demonstrating a strong current of child to parent transfer. Parents and children do not see eye to eye on what constitutes the grounds of grievance.

It would be unwise to close the door on these relationships without cutting a little further into the parent-student dyads. One point of entry consists of dividing the pairs according to the parent's sex, and then further according to the child's sex. To simplify the material we shall present only the data for "yes-yes" agreement between parent and child; that is, we shall focus on those cases where both student and parent perceived a grievance. Implicit here is the assumption that the higher the level of congruence the more likely it is that the student transmitted, with some anticipation of the parent's reaction, the upsetting news.

Breaking down the student-parent pairs in the fashion outlined produces some rather striking differences, as the following figures demonstrate:

	Yes-Yes	N		Yes-Yes	N
Son-father	19%	(64)[1]	Son-mother	28%	(81)
Daughter-father	18%	(69)	Daughter-mother	38%	(95)
Student-father (total)	19%	(133)	Student-mother (total)	33%	(176)

The percentages refer to the proportion of pairs out of all pairs (indicated by the N's) where the student reported that he had been taught things which would upset the parent. Without question such agreement is considerably higher among student-mother pairs than among student-father pairs. And within the former concordance is especially high among daughter-mother pairs. Significant also is the fact that son-mother agreement runs higher than that for son-father, suggesting a cross-sex pattern of considerable intuitive interest. It should be reiterated that there are no perceptible differences in grievance rates between mothers and fathers in the aggregate. Nor are there perceptible differences between sons and daughters in the student sample. Hence the variations recorded above are not artifacts of differential grievance rates among either parents or children by sex.[2]

Just why the articulation between students and parents should be so much higher among student-mother than student-father pairs is not an easily resolved question, and we shall not assay to answer it fully here. One possible explanation is that mothers, typically the main linkage between the child and school as the child goes through his formal education, are more accustomed to and attuned to the child's reports about school experiences. The child, on his part, "reads" the mother's attitudes better than his father's because of these long-standing communication patterns. In judging whether he has been taught things to which his parents would object, the student may be focussing on his mother's reaction more so than his father's.

Another possible explanation has to do with the closeness of relationships between student and parent. Conceivably the closer the child feels to his parent the more likely will he correctly estimate the parent's reaction. The students were asked how close they felt to each parent--"very close," "pretty close," or "not very close." Both boys and girls felt considerably closer to their mothers than their fathers, although boys felt slight closer to their fathers than did girls, and girls felt slightly closer to their mothers than did boys. If, then, the students generally feel closer to their mothers than their fathers perhaps this produces higher agreement among mothers and students. For this to be true, there would have to be a positive correlation between degree of closeness and parent-student agreement.

This argument is partially vindicated by the data. Table 3 shows the proportion of "yes-yes" outcomes among student-mother and student-father pairs with controls for student sex and closeness to the parent.

TABLE 3

Agreement Between Student-Parent Pairs That Student Was Taught Grievance-Producing Content

Student-Father Pairs by Sex of Student and Closeness to Father			Student-Mother Pairs by Sex of Student and Closeness to Mother		
Sons: very	18%[a]	(18)	Sons: very	31%	(50)
Sons: pretty	21	(33)	Sons: pretty	21	(26)
Sons: not very	19	(11)	Sons: not very	0	(1)
Daughters: very	16	(18)	Daughters: very	46	(45)
Daughters: pretty	20	(32)	Daughters: pretty	34	(36)
Daughters: not very	17	(15)	Daughters: not very	15	(9)

[a]Entries indicate the percentage of parent-student pairs where both said yes in response to question about parent being upset out of all cases where the student reported in the affirmative.

Among the student-mother pairs it is quite clear that the closeness of the student--regardless of sex--to the mother does affect the proportions of pairs replying in the affirmative to the question concerning grievance. The closer the child feels to his mother the more likely they will agree. Among the father-student pairs, however, no such pattern prevails. Consequently, it appears that the student's closeness to his mother does help produce higher agreement between the students and mothers. And since more students feel closer to their mothers than to their fathers this would help explain the greater student-mother agreement. While

the results for the father-student pairs do not contradict this argument, they do undermine the general thesis. More investigation into the family structure and dynamics would be necessary to understand the nature of the different processes at work among fathers and students versus mothers and students.

At the outset of this discussion we speculated that the analysis might not yield much confirmation of acknowledged student to parent transmission of grievances because of several conditions. In general this proved to be true. It was demonstrated, however, that certain intra-familial structures increased the likelihood of student-parent agreement that a transgression had transpired. The differentiated roles of mothers and fathers and the relationships between students and parents emerge as significant variables.[1] To conclude that the perception of grievances differs between students and parents within the same family is not to conclude that the student plays a minor role in the parental development of grievances. The parents' basic clues inevitably come from their offspring. Other factors, including student-parent relationships, intervene to help determine how the parents will interpret these clues.

Grievances and Participation in School Affairs

We have observed that parents with grievances do not bear in much degree characteristics often strongly associated with participatory modes of socio-political behavior. Due to the particular nature of the sample, however, as well as the particular slice of political life with which we have been dealing, it would be well to take a closer look at the interrelationships between grievance modes and participatory modes.

There are, as noted previously, two measurements of dissatisfaction--whether the parent was upset with anything his child had been taught or told in classes at school, and whether other events at school had upset the parent. To these two measures we may juxtapose two others which are participatory and typically school-supportive in nature. The first measure rests on the responses to a straightforward "yes-no" question: "During the past two years or so, would you say that you have taken an active part in any local school matters?" Those replying "yes" are considered participants.[1] Although these respondents were, in turn, asked to indicate the nature of their activity, we shall not be concerned with this matter here. A second indicator of participation came from replies to a question about membership and activity levels in the high school PTA, or its functional equivalent: "Do you happen to belong to the parents' organization at the high school your child attends?" Those answering "yes" were asked if they attended meetings regularly. From these responses the parents were divided into three groups--1) High (belong and attend meetings regularly); 2) Medium (belong but do not attend meetings regularly); and 3) Low (do not belong).[2]

In the aggregate, participation looms as large or larger than does grievance among the parents, as this comparison reveals:

Take part in school matters		Participation in parent organization[1]			Upset by events at school		Upset by what child taught		N
Yes	No	High	Medium	Low	Yes	No	Yes	No	
% 31	69	13	24	63	27	73	13	87	(1920)

If we were to view involvement and dissatisfaction with school affairs as causally related, we would hypothesize at least a moderately positive linkage between the participators and grievance holders. That is, if participation were a prerequisite to grievances, or if grievances led to participation, the congruences between the two sets of behaviors should be high. Overlap would also be high if one postulated a threshold of concern with school affairs such that both participation and dissatisfaction could be manifested without necessarily being causally related. A strong interest in the school and the child's relation to the school could generate both participation and dissatisfaction merely because the more interested have a greater motivation for participation and have more sensitive antennae for picking up disturbing stimuli.

An alternative, conflicting model would predict a negative association between the grievance holders and the participators. In part this model stems from the widely-recognized propensity of school-related organizations to be supporters of the system. Such organizations are often co-opted by the school administrative hierarchy and the school board.[2] In the case of the familiar PTA's the intimate relationships between the professionals and the lay members are likely to foster and bolster supportive stances on

the part of the lay (parent) members. Similarly the cadre of activists in school matters are typically people who are protagonists; antagonists, it would seem from case studies,[1] tend to be drawn into this issue-area when they see the school engaging in activity threatening some basic value premise. Occasionally the aroused forces may move from an episodic to a more permanent status, but this is probably the more unusual case.

We may now move to an examination of the data to determine which of these models--the participation-grievance marriage or the participation-grievance separation--best describes the parental patterns. Table 4 depicts the interrelationships between and among the two measures of participation and the two measures of grievance. The gamma coefficients show the overall association between each of the six paired relationships. It is quite clear that the two participation measures are rather highly related to each other on the one hand, and that the same is true of the two grievance measures. While there are plentiful exceptions, there is a general tendency for level of PTA participation to be associated with taking part in school affairs, and vice versa, and for dissatisfaction about the instruction of the child to be related to other sources of dissatisfaction with the school (and vice versa).

On the participation side these findings are consistent with our general expectations that forms of social and political participation within specific arenas will be related to each other.[2] As for the pair of grievances, the association suggests that grievances may be contagious; that is, having experienced one particular upset the parent may be sensitized to the presence of other factors causing dissatisfaction. He may begin searching

TABLE 4

Interrelationships Between and Among Measures of Participation and Grievance Regarding School Affairs
(Percentaged in Both Directions)

	Take part in school matters		Activity in PTA				Upset by events at school			Upset by what child taught			
	Yes	No	High	Medium	Low		Yes	No		Yes	No		N[a]
e part in ool matters													
Yes			% 28	29	43	100%	33	67	100%	15	85	100%	(583)
No			% 6	22	71	99%	25	75	100%	12	88	100%	(1,333)
			gamma=.53[b]				gamma=.20			gamma=.14			
ivity in													
High	% 66	34	100%				30	70	100%	11	89	100%	(245)
Medium	% 36	64	100%				30	70	100%	15	85	100%	(468)
Low	% 21	79	100%				26	74	100%	12	88	100%	(1,203)
	gamma=.53						gamma=.09			gamma=.05			
et by events school													
Yes	% 37	63	100%				14	27	59	100%		21	79	100%	(520)
No	% 28	72	100%				12	24	64	100%		9	91	100%	(1,396)
	gamma=.20						gamma=.09					gamma=.45			
et by what ld taught													
Yes	% 36	64	100%				12	29	59	100%	46	54	100%		(242)
No	% 30	70	100%				13	24	63	100%	24	76	100%		(1,673)
	gamma=.14						gamma=.05				gamma=.45				

[a] The N's vary slightly within each set of tables for a given variable; the N's given are minimum ones.

[b] The sets of gammas on each side of the diagonal are necessarily the same since they are measuring the association between the same pairs of variables.

for other phenomena to support and reinforce his initial distress. On the other hand, such people may simply be more critically disposed and doubtful about the educational system in general. Present data are insufficient for carefully examining these two possibilities.

Of more direct relevance are the relationships reaching across the participation and grievance modes. Here the relationships are weak or virtually nonexistent. Whether the parent has a grievance with the school makes for little difference in whether he has participated in school matters. By the same token, participation versus nonparticipation is a very poor predictor of whether the parent will have a grievance. The paired relationships involving PTA activity levels are particularly significant in this respect. These pairs produce the lowest gamma correlations (.09 and .05) and show scarcely any fluctuation across the three activity-levels. The boosterism typifying the leit motif of PTA's does not prevent some of the high activists from admitting to grievances; at the same time, being outside the organization or only marginally involved does not inflate the complaint rate. Compared with the more general measure of taking part in school matters, the PTA activity index provides a slightly stronger case for the non-association of participation-grievance phenomena. It would follow that if a goal of school personnel is to minimize disgruntlement within a system where lay participation is a normative requirement, then an appropriate strategy is to involve more people in the PTA (co-opt them) rather than leave them to other forms of participation where, as the figures of Table 4 suggest, more grievance is likely to occur.

There is, then, little support for the causal model which states that participation will lead to an awareness of imperfections which will in turn lead to grievances or, conversely, that having a grievance is likely to lead to a general state of participation (as distinguished from an ad hoc action designed to redress a grievance). Neither would the threshold version of this model seem to fit. That is, even though causal relationships are not at work, a threshold of interest or exposure to the functioning of the school and the child's relation to it might prompt both participation and displeasure. In either of these two cases moderately high relationships should have prevailed between the participation-grievance pairs.

What of the conflicting model which predicted a negative association between activism and dissatisfaction? Clearly it does not hold either. Simply because the parent engages in school affairs and is, often enough, a member of an organization which is likely to be a part of the school "establishment" does not make him any more immune to perceiving imperfections in the system than in the case of the nonactivist. Perhaps equally pertinent, it does not prevent him from confessing to such grievances in the presence of an interviewer. Neither does low activism inordinately increase the rate of displeasure. But of the two models, the one positing a positive association comes somewhat closer to being borne out. It appears likely that a common stimulus--perhaps simple interest in school affairs--accounts for some parents being both activists and critics.

The inadequacy of the two models of participation-grievance interactions does not, of course, rule out interdependencies. Despite the lack of either positive or negative associations between engagement and dissatisfaction we cannot say with certainty that given individuals do not fit

these patterns. For example, some activists may in reality develop a state of grievance as a result of their participation even though non-activists develop grievances with about the same frequency. What we can say is that there are no systematic, uniform tendencies in this direction. This being the case, we would conclude that the two behaviors are not associated with each other even though in some fraction of cases the behaviors may be affected by each other or by some mutual source.

Additional insight into the nature of the parents inclining toward the grievance versus those tending toward the participant side may be gained by examining the politicized nature of the two types. We would expect the activist types to be more politically oriented in general than are the grievance-holders. Yet to the extent that the threshold hypothesis has any validity, we would also expect at least some positive relationship between expressions of dissatisfaction and other forms of politically-oriented postures. That is, if one argues that people expressing some grievance about the school system are at least interested enough in this sphere of personal affairs-public affairs interplay to have developed some negative feelings, then there should be some tendency for these people to be politicized in other areas also. Indeed, as was just shown there is a small manifestation of this in the relationship between taking part in school affairs and having a grievance. Because of their similarity in approach, we shall use only the two questions about general participation in school affairs and about general upsetting events in the following analysis.

Three indicators of politicization will be employed: 1) participation in community affairs; 2) attention paid to government and public affairs

in general; and 3) political efficacy.[1] Table 5 shows the relationships between these variables and participating and holding a grievance. On

TABLE 5

Relationships Between Three Measures of Politicization and School Participation and School Grievance

	Take part in school matters			Upset by events at school		
	Yes	No	N	Yes	No	N
Participate in community matters						
Yes	54%	46%	(572)	33%	67%	(570)
No	21	79	(1,350)	25	75	(1,345)
	gamma=.64			gamma=.21		
How closely follow government						
Most of time	38%	62%	(940)	31%	69%	(940)
Some of time	29	71	(588)	28	72	(585)
Now and then	19	81	(251)	20	80	(252)
Hardly at all	10	90	(142)	14	86	(142)
	gamma=.33			gamma=.19		
Political efficacy						
High - 1	44%	56%	(304)	30%	70%	(304)
2	36	64	(572)	32	68	(572)
3	27	73	(530)	27	73	(530)
4	23	77	(324)	24	76	(324)
Low - 5	17	83	(177)	14	86	(176)
	gamma=.28			gamma=.16		

all measures the more politicized the parent the more likely he is to report taking part in school affairs. Positive relationships also hold between these measures and expressions of disgruntlement. In accordance with expectations, though, these associations are considerably smaller.[2] We are not positing any necessary unilateral causal connections between the politicization

variables and the other two. They are, most probably, bound up in circularity. For example, the more one participates the more likely he will feel efficacious, and by the same token, the more efficacious he is, the more likely will he participate. This line of reasoning works suitably enough on the activism side, but is less facile on the grievance dimension.

Of central importance here is the positive, though moderate association between grievance-holding and the three measures of politicization. Parents who tend to be more withdrawn from political life are not more inclined to be grievance-holders. Even though they are not as politicized as the activists, the disgruntled are clearly not from the apolitical strata. In some ways this would be considered a "healthy" sign for the school as a political system. If grievance-holding were inversely related to politicization, this would suggest a potential build-up of frustration and hostility. That those from the more politicized strata are somewhat more likely to have experienced dissatisfaction probably acts to reduce personal frustration albeit making life more difficult for the school board and staff.

While politicization is much more strongly associated with participant behavior than with expressing dissatisfaction, it might be that those parents exhibiting both of these behaviors would be the most politicized of all. This would follow from the assumption that both involvement and a predisposition to be aroused by political stimuli are characteristics of the most political of men. It is not dissimilar from the view that those who participate most in politics are at least somewhat more likely to have intense feelings.[1]

To test this hunch the parents were arranged into four groupings on an index of school involvement: 1) those who were participants and grievance

holders; 2) those who were only participants; 3) those who were only grievance holders; and 4) those who were neither. It will facilitate comparisons if we look at the proportions of each of these four groupings exhibiting the highest politicized states:

	Participated an upset	Participated only	Upset only	Neither Participated nor upset
Follow government				
Most of the time	63%	59%	51%	42%
Political efficacy				
Highest	25	22	13	13
Participate in community affairs				
Yes	62	48	21	19
N^a =	(193)	(395)	(329)	(1,002)

[a]N is $\pm$ one or two cases for some of the cells.

The figures reveal that high states of politicization decrease in their frequency as we move from those who both participated and developed dissatisfaction on through to those who experienced neither of these. Although the differences between positions one and two are not great with the exception of participation in community affairs, there is some suggestion that dual modes of relations with the school are accompanied by greater politicization.[1] When holding a grievance is chained up with participation, high politicization is the most intense. Those with both expressive and reactive manifestations to school life exhibit more signs of great politicization. Our earlier conclusion that the participants were more politically oriented than the grievance holders must be modified slightly to accommodate the additive properties of participation and dissatisfaction.

The Substance of Grievances

Having explored the distribution and sources of grievances, we may now inquire as to the nature of these dissatisfactions. One might argue that many complaints parents hold are too trivial to be worth considering. The republic will not flounder nor the school district crumble if Bill's father is upset because the government teacher doesn't parse the constitution to his liking, or if Susie's mother is having a minor trauma because the girls have gang showers. Nevertheless, the accumulation of such grievances and their aggregation into demands often become the warp and woof of local school politics. Even if this were not the case, the substance of grievances at the micro level (i.e., at the individual level) merits inquiry, and not only because micro-units are themselves miniature systems. An inquiry will also provide some indication of the evaluational criteria parents employ in judging the schools and pinpoint arenas of potential conflict.

Parents reporting they had been disturbed by what their child had been taught or had been upset by other events at school were asked to relate the contents of the upsetting experience.[1] Responses of a wide range emerged, some of which do indeed sound trivial and many of which are far from exciting. Taking only the respondents' first-mentioned attributes,[2] the great variety of explanations has been compressed into the general categories shown in Table 6 .

One of the striking qualities of the grievance-substance lies in the differences between those involving objections to what the child had been taught and those involving other aspects of school life. Nearly three-fifths

TABLE 6

Nature of Grievance Held by Parent

Substance of Grievance	Parent upset by: What child taught	Other events
Morals, ethics, and religion	36%	10%
Politics and political ideology	22	1
Civil rights matters	6	5
Teaching methods and practices	10	13
Teacher attitudes and characteristics	18	24
School services and administration	3	18
Regulations and discipline	3	19
Other and miscellaneous	1	9
	99%	99%
	N = (230)	N = (517)

of the former occur in the content areas of morals-ethics-religion and politics-political ideology. These topics account for only one-tenth of the second type of grievance. Parents perturbed by other events cluster nearly three-fourths of their objections in teaching methods and practices, sundry teacher attitudes and characteristics (exclusive of the other categories), school services and administration, and regulations and discipline. Thus the focus of complaints involving the content of the child's instruction rests very heavily in the perennial battlegrounds of religion and politics, to shorten the expression, whereas other complaints have more to do with the traditional functions and activities of teachers and administrators

in the school. Overall, the rank order correlation between the two sets is -.15, using Spearman's rho.

A closer look at the first column of Table 6 heightens the impression that the religion-politics themes are paramount with respect to grievances about instruction content. In the first place, references to civil rights may be properly added to the politics theme. In the second place, many of the other references really have more to do with how the child was taught rather than what was taught. If these are excluded from calculation the proportion lying in the religion-politics families increases even further. Diversity in religion and politics, along with ethnicity, are perhaps among the last outposts of individual and group differentiation in a society presumably marked by increasing homogeneity. A tenacious defense of the values wrapped up in these differentiations--including resentment about their even being touched upon--may explain part of the parental focus on religion and politics.

More important, probably, is that orientations to both religion and politics are singular foci of familial socialization. In the folkways of American society religion and politics have been considered "a man's own business." The intergenerational transfer of these orientations is a well-known fact.[1] Instruction in the school--no matter how oblique--which threatens to undermine these orientations may be viewed very dimly by parents jealous of this prerogative. Even teaching about presumably objective facts, to say nothing of calling for tolerance of nonconformity or outright pitches for a point of view, may be enough to elicit a grievance, as an examination of the interview protocols would show.

When we shift from grievances about what the child had been taught to other sorts of complaints, the focus moves away from content issues and toward conduct issues. How the teachers teach, how they conduct themselves in the classroom, the problems of how the students interact with each other and the constraints placed (or not placed) upon the students, and the deportment and quality of the administration comprise the main grievance-substances. Complaints gravitate toward the school's role as a producer and processor of materials. That not all of these complaints have to do with the academic quality of the school is not surprising. How the game is played becomes as important as the goals of the game in an egalitarian-prone society, of which the school is a prime institutional example. The school is a social system and grievances embodying norms, roles, authority, and conflicts within that system will almost inevitably emerge.

Although we shall not probe deeply into why some parents become perturbed about particular aspects while others find yet different qualities not to their liking, two examples will be presented to illustrate that at least some of these grievance-substances are likely to spring from concerns permeating the general parental frame of reference. Let us take grievances involving what the offspring had been taught, and particularly those falling in the religion-morals and in the politics-civil rights arenas. Most of the references in the former category had to do with perceived violations and excesses of norms; that is, the parent felt some boundary of taste or principles had been overstepped. With respect to politics and civil rights there was no decided tendency in terms of direction; parents about as frequently felt the content had been too liberal as too conservative, and often the direction of content was not at issue at all.

Bearing these different properties in mind, we sought to determine what factors might underlie sensitivity in the two arenas. In the case of religion and morals where, as noted, the objection typically involved a transgression of standards, it was hypothesized that religious fundamentalism would be a critical discriminating factor. It seemed likely that parents holding firm, fundamental tenets would perceive violations of these tenets more often than parents not so inclined. Fundamentalists tend to see themselves as a minority holding out against an encroaching secularism in the world, liberalism in theology, and relativistic morality. For the schools to undermine a belief system they have tried to cultivate in their children would be aggravating for the fundamentalists, or so we hypothesized.

A simple question was employed to affix a belief in fundamentalism position to the respondents. They were presented with four statements describing views about the God-inspired nature of the Bible, ranging all the way from a belief in the Bible as "God's word and all it says is true" on through departures from this view to the other extreme that the Bible is relatively worthless.[1] After dividing the respondents into three groups according to their fundamentalist position, their frequency of referrals to religious grievances was then noted. As it turns out, the hypothesis is supported, as the following figures indicate:

Fundamentalist position	Proportion referring to religious-moral issues	N
High	47%	(108)
Medium	28	(104)
Low	20	(14)

The higher the subscription to a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, the more likely will the grievance-bearing parent cite religious-moral issues as the grounds for his grievance.

In the case of grievances focussing on political content we looked toward variables which were not ideologically-hued in nature. Since objections to political matters ranged rather evenly over an ideological spectrum (in contrast to the religious-moral arena), it seemed appropriate to look at explanatory variables which were relatively affect-free. We hypothesized that parents objecting to political content would be parents for whom politics in general was more salient. In part this is because such parents are likely to have more information with which to confront the instructional content presented to the child. Perhaps more importantly, the parent for whom politics is more salient is likely to take a greater interest in the civic education of his child and other students in the school. He is more likely to monitor the inputs, and to apply correctives.

The saliency of public affairs and politics was tapped by asking the parents how closely they followed government affairs in general.[1] When the respondents are allocated into three response categories and these are cross-tabulated against grievances having to do with politics the following picture emerges:

How closely follow government	Proportion referring to political issues	N
Most of time	37%	(142)
Some of time	18	(53)
Now and then, or hardly at all	12	(32)

As hypothesized, those for whom politics is more salient are more likely to generate grievances lying in the political domain. Other analyses showed a moderately positive correlation between how closely government affairs were followed and the likelihood of having a grievance about the child's instruction (gamma=.26). What is striking is that even within this overall association those for whom politics is most salient are particularly inclined to select out the politically relevant as the substance of grievance.

Probing for the underlying factors of grievances in the religious-moral and political realms suggests that specific grievances develop in the context of more deeply embedded commitments. While some capriciousness and idiosyncratic behaviors undoubtedly enter in, the upset parent appears to be responding in a fashion consistent with value premises and orientations of more than fleeting significance. Thus it is not surprising that severe battles occasionally erupt in the schools (as well as in families). These encounters are classic examples of personal value systems at odds with "institutional" value systems.

The child, for his part, is caught in a conflictful home-school interface. Whether the parental values and orientations are also those of the child may be inconsequential to the parent. To what extent the home-school conflict raises problems for the child and how he resolves these are intriguing questions lying at the heart of the socialization process. For students of political and religious socialization in particular, these are fundamental questions in serious need of investigation.

The Redress of Grievances

To have a grievance is one matter; to take compensatory action is another. At least two conditions must prevail in order for redress to be attempted. -The parent must feel that the stakes at issue are vital and appropriate resources, including a feeling of competence, must be at hand. One can imagine situations in which the parent is quite upset but lacks the skills of redress or feels that action would be ineffectual, as well as the contrary case where the parent has sufficient resources but fails to place a high premimum on the grievance. A third contingency, for the prudent parent, would be a projection as to the consequences of his compensatory action. If he tells Susie that the history teacher sounds like a socialist, what will be the ultimate consequence of this action? The prudent parent will weigh the probabilities of certain outcomes before undertaking compensatory action. Where redress is attempted two prime channels are open. The parent may deal directly with his offspring and attempt to undercut or mediate what transpired at school. An alternative mode of attack is to deal directly with school personnel. The parent may elect to use both avenues, but it seems likely he would stress one or the other.

Of the pool of parents expressing dissatisfactions, what proportion goes on to attempt to redress them, what factors distinguish those who do, and what mechanisms do they use? After describing the nature of their complaint these parents were asked if they "did anything about it." Those who had taken compensatory steps related the nature of the action. Table 7 presents for both grievance measures the proportions not taking action and, for those taking action, the mechanisms employed.

TABLE 7

Incidence and Type of Redress or Compensatory Action in Response to Grievance

Compensatory Action	Parent upset by: What child taught		Other events	
No compensation sought	62%[a]	--%[b]	52%[a]	--%[b]
Compensation sought through:				
Action with child	19	51	9	18
Unilateral action with school	15	39	36	74
Corporate action with school	4	10	4	8
	100%	100%	101%	100%
	N = (236)	(89)	N = (486)	(238)

[a]These percentages are derived from base which includes all parents who were upset.

[b]These percentages stem from a base of parents who took compensatory action.

Let us deal first with the instances where no redress was sought. For both grievance measures a majority of parents took no action to rectify matters. Why the proportion should be higher for grievances involving instructional content than for other happenings is not immediately apparent. It may be that parents generate more intensity over the conduct and style issues, which are more typical of grievances about "other events," than about content issues, which are more common of grievances about what the child was told.

Unfortunately we were not able to probe systematically into the reasons for lack of compensatory efforts. A number of interviewees volunteered their reasons. Occasionally the need for redress took care of itself without parental action. This was true of about 3% of the parents under both sets of grievances. Thus the figures in Table 7 for "no compensation sought" are slightly inflated (it is impossible to tell exactly how much) by the inclusion of those parents for whom action proved unnecessary. Other parents opined that any steps taken would be ineffectual. Such views occurred more often with respect to more general grievances (8%) than to instructional content grievances (3%). These figures lend at least some support to our speculation that a perceived quantity of sufficient resources to affect a redress is a condition for an attempt. Interestingly enough, the child occasionally (less than 2% for each type) dissuaded the parent from acting; the student's motive may be a sheer desire to avoid embarrassment. Exceedingly small numbers of parents observed that they regretted their inaction or that they planned action in the future.

Efforts to redress a grievance have been classified into three categories--efforts directed toward the student, unilateral action directed toward the school, and corporate action directed toward the school. The distinction between the latter two categories is that in the first instance the parent(s) acted solo, whereas in the latter they banded together with other individuals, either on an ad hoc basis or via established groups. The case of corporate action probably signifies that the grievance has surfaced into a public issue.

Immediately apparent in Table 7 are the distinctly different modes of compensatory behavior utilized in the two sets of grievances. Parents upset by what their offspring has been taught are much more disposed toward rectifying the situation through the child. Since most of these grievances occur in the religious-moral and in the political arenas such efforts are directed toward shoring up the familial values and discounting what happened at school. Nevertheless, nearly two-fifths of the parents did exercise their prerogatives by dealing unilaterally with the school.

Parents perturbed by other events proved much more inclined to seek redress by taking unilateral action with the school. At issue here are grievances which are not as amenable to shoring up and discounting processes because they extend well beyond basic family values. Teacher conduct and course content (outside of religious and political matters) instructional methods, administrative deportment and school services, and the disciplinary-regulatory system are of a different order. To right these "wrongs" negotiations must be carried on with school personnel.

Taking corporate action is apparently a step of last resort. The most obvious reason is that the grievances often do not affect other parents and groups in the school community. If we are to judge by the relative infrequency of corporate action, most grievances are family-specific. An alternative explanation is that no ready-made organizations exist for processing the grievances. The same grievance could be held by many parents but all compensatory action <u>vis-a-vis</u> the school could be solo. This explanation is, we think, less tenable given the propensity of Americans to opt for collective action to redress widespread wrongs. Furthermore, to be coded as corporate

action, the minimal requirement was simply collective action with anyone else (excluding spouse). Given the small proportions meeting even this minimal criterion, we would conclude that where redress was attempted the grievance tended to be concentrated in single families rather than diffused among several.

Are there any systematic indications of which parents will initiate compensatory behavior and which will not? Looking first at grievances arising from what the child was taught, we found a few such indications though none of profound strength. Redress was more often sought among working class rather than middle class parents, those who had not participated in community affairs, those who were weak rather than strong partisans, and persons who were not lifetime residents of the community. The associations are suggestive rather than definitive with the gamma correlations ranging in the modest regions of .17 to .22.[1]

Some of these associations run counter to the usual findings of social and political participation. This can be explained in part by the fact that a majority of these redress attempts occurred within the home. The opportunity costs normally associated with expressing preferences and rectifying wrongs would not apply here. In general, though, we have not adequately accounted for very much of the variation in redress effort. Further analysis revealed that such efforts varied not at all according to size of school, metropolitanism of the community, the public or nonpublic character of the school, the education and occupation of the head of household, or the respondent's political efficacy.

If we find it difficult to explain redress attempts for grievances about what the child was told in school, the same is even truer for grievances about other aspects of school life. None of the independent variables referred to in the preceding two paragraphs yield associations with redress efforts in excess of .14 and most are considerably lower. There is some indication that participants in community affairs and strong partisans are more likely to take action than their opposites, patterns which reverse those for the other form of grievance. Since redressing these grievances more often involves a confrontation with school personnel, rather than action in the home, these reversals are explicable. One would expect that participation in community affairs would give the parent a greater feeling of competence to deal with school officials; by the same token since strong partisans are more likely to be participative in politics and to have stronger beliefs we would expect them also to have a greater feeling of competence.

By looking more closely at the data we can observe the differentiated impact of structural variables. We hypothesized that redress efforts would be affected by the degree to which individual parent characteristics were compatible with those of all parents. That is, the more nearly the individual resembles the collectivity the more likely will he seek redress. This is simply a variant of the view that minorities in specific situations will be less likely to express preferences and press demands than will majorities, that they are intimidated and constrained by the very fact they are minorities.

Two structural variables illustrate what appears to be at work. The first is the religious composition of the school (as estimated by school officials). Schools were classified into five categories according to the proportion of Catholic students, ranging from low to high. The grand correlation between proportion Catholic and seeking redress is an insignificant .06. But controlling for parent religious preference, the following gamma correlations were obtained between seeking redress and the Catholic composition of the school:

		N
Catholics	.28	(94)
Protestants	.06	(341)
Jews	-.38	(24)

[1]

Without doubt the more Catholic the school the more likely will Catholics and the less likely will Jews initiate compensatory action. Protestants in the aggregate are not affected by the proportion Catholic. When the schools are classified according to the proportion Protestant the results form something of a mirror for the Catholic parents with the correlation

being -.25. Again there is a negative correlation for Jews, -.26, and virtually no relationship, -.08, for Protestants. If we knew the precise make-up by denomination of the Protestant proportions in the schools, we could conceivably improve upon the relationships for Protestants.[1]

Another structural variable employed involves a combination of the academic quality and social class composition of the school. The proportion of graduating seniors going on to a four-year college is in part a function of two variables--the academic calibre of the school and the ability of the students and parents to finance further education.[2] The schools were distributed into five groups, ranging from low to high, by the proportion of seniors matriculating in a four-year college. No single direct analogue for this measure exists in looking at individuals.[3] Subjective social class was taken as an admittedly crude summary variable because it combines economic, educational, and self-evaluation dimensions. Two categories are employed--working class and middle class.[4]

In this analysis we examine the association between social class and seeking redress at each of the five levels of "proportion seniors going to a four-year college." The hypothesis is that the relationship between social class and redress attempts will increase as the proportion of seniors going to college increases. Working class parents are scored as "1" (or low) and middle class parents as "2" (or high) for computational purposes. The gamma correlations are as follows:

Proportion to 4-year college			N
Low	1	-.34	(79)
	2	-.12	(100)
	3	-.07	(116)
	4	.25	(74)
High	5	.27	(100)

As predicted the correlations increase with rising college-going proportions. Another way of putting this is to say that the lower the proportion of seniors going to college the more likely will working class parents take compensatory action and, conversely, the higher the proportion of seniors going to college the more likely will middle class parents initiate such action. The correlations are especially significant in the light of an overall relationship of .04 between seeking redress and social class.

Our close analysis of religious and "on to college" variables underscores the significance of structural and contextual properties in understanding parental relationships with the schools. Examining only individual properties and collective group properties yields less returns than the combination of such properties. It underscores also the uniqueness of individual school communities. The interplay of forces results in patterns of behavior not easily detected by reliance on monistic interpretations.

Our grasp of the politics of local education is at best meager. Because schools touch the lives of most individuals in significant ways, because they are institutions subject to public and quasi-public control, and because schools serve as an intersect of private versus societal needs and values the grievance phenomenon has been viewed as a part of political life. Although local school systems are being subjected to an increasing influx of nationalization forces, the fabric of parent-school relations will probably prove highly resilient to such forces. Parents will continue to want to have some say in the education of their young; and they will continue to monitor, though surely in varying degrees, the outcomes of local education. When outcomes conflict with preferred values grievances develop. The objectives of this paper have been to chart some of the dimensions of the development, nature, and handling of grievances.

FOOTNOTES

*I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Michael Traugott in preparing this paper. Financial sponsorship for the study reported here comes from The Danforth Foundation.

Page 1:

[1]The reference is to Thomas H. Eliot, "Towards an Understanding of Public School Politics," American Political Science Review, 53 (December, 1959), pp. 1032-51. While some inroads have been made on the understanding of public school politics with respect to decision-making and aggregate phenomena, this is less true concerning studies of mass publics. Notable exceptions, however, are Warner Bloomberg, Jr. and Morris Sunshine, Suburban Power Structures and Public Education (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963); and Marshall Goldstein and Robert S. Cahill, "Mass Media and Community Politics," in Robert S. Cahill and Stephen P. Hencley (eds.), The Politics of Education in the Local Community (Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers and Publishers, Inc., 1964), pp. 163-88.

Page 2:

[1]An account of the tasks involved in securing the cooperation of the schools is given in M. Kent Jennings and Lawrence E. Fox, "The Conduct of Survey Research in Schools: Problems and Strategies of Access," (unpublished paper).

Page 3:

[1]This is necessary since only one-half of these parents would have been selected under the rules employed in the single parent (family representative) selections. An alternative to half weighting the parents falling in pairs is to subselect within each pair. The virtue of half weighting lies in a reduced sampling variability. Initial tabulations indicated scarcely any difference according to whether half weighting or subselection was employed.

Page 5:

[1]Gamma is an ordinal statistic measuring the degree of association in a cross-classification. Values ordinarily run higher than for the related tau-beta measure. The "Yes-No" dichotomies which form the operational bases for the dependent variables throughout most of this paper have been treated as ordinal data. Most other variables used have at least ordinal-level properties. The Goodman and Kruskal gamma is discussed in L. A. Goodman and W. H. Kruskal, "Measures of Association for Cross-Classification," Journal of American Statistical Association, 49 (1954), pp. 723-64. See also M. Zelditch, A Basic Course in Sociological Statistics (New York: 1959), pp. 180-86.

Page 6:

[1]Bloomberg and Sunshine, op. cit., p. 149.

Page 7:

[1]Structural variables here do not refer to compositional or climate measures which depend upon individual-level measures for their construction.

[2]Schools were divided according to whether they fell within one of the twelve largest Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's) any other SMSA, or in a non-SMSA.

Page 8:

[1]The questions: 1) "Aside from things having to do with the social studies area, has this school been the focal point of any kind of controversey in the last two or three years?" 2)"During the last few years, have there been any actual cases around here in which a teacher was criticized for discussing a controversial social or political issue in class?" 3) "Have you felt any pressure or encouragement from any groups or individuals in the community to have your teachers emphasize or avoid certain topics in the classroom?" In constructing the index "yes" replies were given a value of "1" and "no" replies a value of "0."

[2]As will be noted later, objections concerning the child's instruction revolved much more around social and political issues, the kind of issues tapped by the questions addressed to the principals.

Page 8a:

[1]Bloomberg and Sunshine, op. cit., pp. 137-70, passim.

Page 9:

[1]Students were asked: "Have you ever been taught or told things in any of your classes here that you thought your family would not like?"

Page 12:

[1]The N's for the parent-student pairs will be higher than would be anticipated from the cross-sectional parent N's used heretofore. The father and mother samples may be considered as two distinct samples. Each father and each mother of each student had an "equal" probability of being drawn in the sample of fathers and the sample of mothers. Thus we may apply the full weights to all mother-student and father-student pairs and not "half-weight" the parents who formed halves in the instances where both mother and father were sampled.

Page 12:
(cont.)

[2]Measuring the overall association between the complete set of parent and child replies yields gammas of .29 for student-father (total); .33 for son-father; .24 for daughter-father; .63 for student-mother (total); .60 for son-mother; and .64 for daughter-mother.

Page 15:

[1]Examples of research in this general area are Glen Elder, "Parental Power Legitimation and Its Effects on the Adolescent," Sociometry, 26 (March, 1963), pp. 50-65; John D. Herzog, "Deliberate Instruction and Household Structure," Harvard Educational Review, 32 (Summer, 1962), pp. 301-42; and Russell Middleton and Snell Putney, "Political Expression of Adolescent Rebellion," American Journal of Sociology, 68 (1963), pp. 527-35.

Page 16:

[1]The respondents answering in the affirmative did not necessarily have high school matters in mind. However, the fact that a majority of the parents had no children in elementary school, the respondent's awareness that his high school offspring was the focus of the study, and the nature of the responses to the trailer question all indicate that for most respondents the high school rather than an elementary school was the object of the response. In any event this possible ambiguity is not crucial to the point we shall make.

[2]A number of schools, 22%, reported they had no parent organizations. For some purposes it would be desirable to drop the parents in such schools from the analysis since nonmembership would prevail. Given the present intentions of showing the degree of association between participation and grievance expressions, regardless of the reasons, these parents will be retained in the tables and will be found in the "Low" participant category.

Page 17:

[1]"Low" includes those in schools where no organization exists.

[2]Some evidence suggests that school boards themselves are co-opted by the administration. See Norman D. Kerr, "The School Board as a Agency of Legitimation," Sociology of Education, 38 (Fall, 1964) pp. 34-59.

Page 18:

[1]Two examples showing how essentially nonschool-related organizations may become deeply embedded in school controversies are Joseph F. Maloney, "The Lonesome Train in Levittown," Interuniversity Case Program (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1958); and Corinne Silverman, "The Little Rock Story," rev. ed., Interuniversity Case Program (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1959).

Page 18:
(cont.)

[2]See, for example, some summaries by Lester Milbrath, Political Participation (Chicago: Rand McNally, Inc., 1965).

Page 23:

[1]The questions employed were as follows, in their respective orders: "What about other local or community matters? Have you taken an active part in any things of that kind?" "Some people seem to think about what's going on in government most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government--most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?" The efficacy items were the standard four Survey Research Center statements.

[2]Similar associations prevail between being upset by what the child had been taught and the politicization measures.

Page 24:

[1]See an example in V. O. Key, Jr., Public Opinion and American Democracy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), pp. 229-30.

Page 25:

[1]The introduction of the other strata within each of the politicization measures does not attenuate the moderately strong relationships between the index of school involvement and each measure. The gamma coefficients between the index and following government affairs, political efficacy, and community participation are .28, .23, and .50 respectively.

Page 26:

[1]The follow-up question for grievances involving instruction read, "What kinds of things do you have in mind?" For the more general case the wording was, "What do you have in mind?"

[2]Few respondents went beyond one type of grievance substance.

Page 28:

[1]For an imaginative example in politics see Herbert McCloskey and Harold E. Dahlgren, "Primary Group Influence on Party Loyalty," American Political Science Review, 53 (September, 1959), pp. 757-76. In religion see Gerhard Lenski, The Religious Factor (New York: Doubleday, 1961).

Page 30:

[1]The four statements were: 1) "The Bible is God's word and all it says is true"; 2) "The Bible was written by men inspired by God but it contains some human errors"; 3) "The Bible is a good book because it was written by wise men but God had nothing to do with it"; 4) "The Bible was written by men who lived so long ago that it is worth very little today." In the analysis presented here, responses 3 and 4 are combined.

Page 31:

[1]For the question wording see note 1, p. 23.

Page 37:

[1]This does not apply to length of residence, where the correlation vanishes to -.01 when the individuals are distributed along a continuum of length of residence. There is, however, something approaching a steplike function among longer-term residents. Only 25% of the lifetime residents sought redress compared with figures of 48% for 15-19 year residents, 46% for 20-29 years, and 47% for 30-49 years (but not all lifetime).

Page 39:

[1]Because of the extremely small N for Jews, this association should be interpreted very cautiously.

Page 40:

[1]Data yet to be analyzed from paper-pencil questionnaires administered to all members of the senior classes in 85% of the sample schools will enable us to do these and other intensive analyses.

[2]Other variables are significant too, one of which is the group "climate." A symposium on social climates is found in the Public Opinion Quarterly, 25 (Winter, 1961).

[3]Educational level was rejected because its effects are mediated over the years and because it is not synonymous with family income.

[4]The classifications are based on responses to this question: "There's quite a bit of talk these days about social classes. Most people say they belong either to the middle class or to the working class. Do you ever think of yourself as being in one of these classes?" Respondents replying in the negative were asked: "Well, if you had to make a choice, would you call yourself middle class or working class?" Respondents who volunteered as "upper class" are combined with the middle class respondents, and those saying "lower class" are included with the working class group.